

From: Greg Mumm
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/22/01 3:55pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement.

I write this email to express my displeasure over the absence of any meaningful punishment against Microsoft.

The recent ruling is a symbolic slap on the wrist that will harm competition and further degrade the economy.

As a software engineer I have had the advantage of observing the last decade and half with a depth and breadth of understanding most do not experience.

Two misconceptions exist about Microsoft. First is that they are innovative and second that they compete fairly.

Microsoft is not innovative and never has been. Four examples follow.

First, since the 1970's UNIX-based computers have allowed file names of virtually any size. While other operating systems like Novell allowed long file names, Microsoft operating systems didn't until late in 1995. Even though Microsoft operating systems contained this glaring handicap, consumers continued to purchase them in favor of those systems with superior features.

Secondly, while many operating systems used more powerful 32-bit instructions in the 1980s and early 1990s, Microsoft continued to use the less powerful 16 and 8 bit instructions. Use of this less powerful instruction set wasn't completely abandoned until Windows NT was shipped, 6 to 8 years after other operating system began using them--an eternity in the high technology industry. If the market place was competitive, wouldn't customers consider purchasing the more powerful of two operating systems? They generally didn't. Sales of Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 soared.

Third, in the 1980s operating systems frequently included graphical interfaces. This user-friendly feature was included with the operating systems in the Apple Macintosh, UNIX and the Commodore Amiga. Yet consumers waited many years until Microsoft released Windows rather than purchasing a competitor's operating system containing this desirable feature.

Fourth, an example about Microsoft inferior compiler products. Compiler technology is important because these utilities allow programmers to write applications for a particular operating system. During the late 1980's and early to mid 90's there were many different compilers available from several vendors. In particular, the company Borland

produced a tool that was smaller, faster and more robust than Microsoft's tool. Once again consumers choose the Microsoft product overwhelmingly over the competitors product. A few programmers even created a compiler that was given away for free that couldn't compete with the Microsoft compiler. Why would consumers pick the Microsoft product over a more innovative product?

Finally, there is the issue of quality. While Linux and other UNIX systems frequently run for months or years without problems, it's often difficult to get a Microsoft operating system to run all day without crashing. Still, the consumers overwhelmingly choose Microsoft as the operating system of choice, despite it's legendary unreliability.

In these cases, and others, the products offered by Microsoft are less innovative, less powerful, harder to use and more unreliable than the products offered by it's competitors.

Microsoft has been very abusive in it's desire to make money as the following four examples illustrate.

First, it's a matter of fact that Microsoft applications like Word and Excel used undocumented features of the Microsoft operating systems they ran under. It wasn't until this practice was widely publicized that Microsoft produced documentation for it's competitors to use. The operating system is like a socket, and applications like Access and Word are the technical equivalent of the light bulb. Microsoft owns both.

The second example concerns malicious code created by Microsoft. The code was placed into Microsoft programs and would display strange messages when running on a non-Microsoft operating system. The phony messages weren't a side-effect, they were the entire purpose of the code modules. In this example, Microsoft's competitor is now out of business.

Third, Microsoft tried to stop the acceptance of Java. Java is an OS-independent language created by Microsoft's rival, Sun Microsystems. Microsoft did not adopt the language and in fact developed a similar one which only runs on Microsoft operating systems. In fact upgrading your Microsoft browser will cause all traces of the Java language to disappear silently from your computer.

Finally, upgrading browser versions causes other problems. Updating a Microsoft browser disables the Netscape plug-in feature. This open-ended feature has been around as long as the Web, but a recent installation quietly removes it in place of a Microsoft-only solution.

In conclusion, Microsoft is not, nor has ever been, innovative. What they have been is an overly aggressive monopoly. Monopolies are bad for everyone because they take a bigger piece of the economic pie than they

are entitled to. It is a travesty of justice to let Microsoft's abusive, monopolistic behavior continue unabated for this long. The current ruling does nothing to solve the problem.

Sincerely,

Greg Mumm